Faculty Job Search: Interviewing

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Note on This Workshop

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Application Process

Application materials

Early-Stage Interviews

Late-Stage Interviews

Offer

Timing between stages is extremely unpredictable.
Goals for Faculty Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department / University</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Assess qualifications beyond application materials</td>
<td>• Learn more about the campus/department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assess tenurability &amp; contribution (<em>Could this person get tenure here? Would this person take our department in a useful direction?</em>)</td>
<td>• Expand on qualifications beyond application materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assess fit (<em>Would this person be a good colleague?</em>)</td>
<td>• Assess fit (<em>Would I want to live and work/live here?</em>)</td>
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Early-Stage Interviews
Structure/Format

• Typically 20-60 minutes with search committee (2-? people)
• Mostly questions for you
• Some time at end for questions from you
• Rarely includes a presentation component
  • More common in Engineering fields (but still uncommon)
Logistics: Before the Interview

- Ask for committee names
- Ask for alternative contact information
Logistics: Setup

• Where?
  • At home
  • Departmental space (conference rooms)
  • University space (try Illini Spaces)
  • Test spaces and connections in advance!
Logistics: Performance

• Dress up
  • Even for phone interview

• Look primarily at the camera

• Some notes are okay
  • Very minimal, especially for phone
  • Try post-its with keyword reminders
Logistics: After the Interview

• Take thorough notes
  • Questions asked
  • Surprises
  • Impressions of the department and its priorities

• Send a thank you note
Answering Questions
General Strategies

• Thought process and organization are important
• Connect answer with institution
• Be positive, clear, and specific
• Tell stories/give examples
• Pay attention to time
  • ~1-3 minutes for most answers
Guaranteed Question Topics

• Questions about research
• Questions about teaching
• Questions about “fit” with institution

See sample questions in “Faculty Interview Questions” handout
Strategies: Research Questions

• Not everyone is an expert in your subfield
• Communicate the significance, contribution, and impact of your work clearly
• Be prepared to discuss research trajectory and plans
• Be prepared to discuss practicalities: funding, mentoring, publication plans, etc.
Strategies: Teaching Questions

• Provide examples of how you have taught in the past
• Be prepared to discuss how you would teach Course X
  • Moderate level of specificity: Overall structure/purpose, example unit or assignment, general learning outcomes
• Demonstrate understanding of campus population
• How does your approach fit with the mission and resources of the institution?
Strategies: Fit Questions

• Be prepared for “Why do you want to work at X?”
• Do your research
  • Job posting, department website, university website, recent news articles, strategic plans, etc.
• Show excitement about their particular context
  • Especially important for liberal arts colleges and teaching-intensive institutions
Questions for Them

• Ask *positive* questions inspired by genuine curiosity

• What do you like best about working in this department?
• How would you describe the culture of the department?
• What opportunities exist to support collaboration with _____ unit on campus?
• What do majors in your department do after graduation?
Next Steps

1. Map out answers to the big questions
   a) Tell us about your dissertation
   b) What is your research agenda for the next 5 years
   c) What is your teaching philosophy
2. Brainstorm stories and examples
3. Start practicing (out loud!)
4. Get feedback

Prep now!
Then tailor to position after an interview invitation
Tools for Practicing Out Loud

• Big Interview Practice Video Interview
  • Details in “Faculty Interviews: Practicing Out Loud” handout

• Career Advising Appointment
  • Make an appointment at https://grad.illinois.edu/careers/advising
Late-Stage Interviews

AKA “Campus Visits” or “Campus Interviews”
Comprehensive Interview

• 1-3 days long, usually on campus
• Typically 2-5 finalists
• Many different elements
Common Elements

- Research talk
- Teaching demonstration
- Individual meetings with faculty
- Interview with search committee
- Meetings with administrators
- Meetings with students
- Meals
- More
Research Talk - Content

• What makes your work interesting and important?
• Show overall profile/trajectory & impact
  • Not just dissertation
  • Mix big-picture and specifics
• Make it accessible to people outside your subfield
  • Your goal is not to overwhelm them with your brilliance
• Use slides thoughtfully
  • Clear structure/outline

Always follow their instructions!
Introduction
- Big picture research agenda
- Motivation, position in field, etc
- Clear structure for rest of talk

Past/Current Work
- Quick overview
- *Zoom in* (specific project & specific impact)
- Connect to motivation for next

Research Plans
- Overall trajectory
- Map of specific directions
- Deep dive on ~1 direction

One Possible Structure (STEM/Exp SocSci)
Proportions will depend on your field and career stage—ask mentors!
Introduction
- Big picture research agenda
- Motivation, position in field, etc
- Clear structure for rest of talk

Dissertation/Book Project
- Quick overview
- Zoom in (specific chapter & specific impact)
- Zoom back out

Future Work
- Second project
- Return to big picture research agenda

One Possible Structure (Hum/SS)

Proportions will depend on your field and career stage—ask mentors!
Research Talk - Delivery

• Who will be in the audience?
  • Faculty from what departments? Students (grad, undergrad)?

• Presentation/communication matters
  • Inferring teaching skills

• Stay under the time limit
  • Clarify how much time should be left for questions

• Practice!
  • Often, out loud, with an audience when possible
Research Talk - Q&A

• Anticipate likely questions
  • What questions do you often hear from colleagues?
  • What are some limitations of your work?

• Approach Q&A as a conversation with colleagues

• Assume everyone is acting in good faith

• Prepare how you will answer a question you don’t know
  • Stay positive. Think with them.
Teaching Demonstration

• What’s the context?
  • Existing class or separate presentation or ____?
  • Audience: faculty, students, both?

• What’s the content?

• What format makes most sense given context and content?
  • Tailor structure to topic, context, kind of institution

• Practice often, out loud

Always follow their instructions!
Meetings with Faculty

Strategies:

• Do your research and anticipate priorities
• No need to read every paper (but know something about their work)
• Approach as a conversation among colleagues
• Ask lots of questions
Meetings with Administrators

• Do your research
  • Their background; Institution mission statement; Strategic plans
• Keep strategic priorities in mind
• Prepare
  • Accessible research description
  • Questions (especially re: future directions, goals/aspirations, etc.)
  • What can you contribute to institution?
• Discuss tenure/promotion expectations (mostly with chair)
• STEM: Be ready for start-up conversation
  • But try to keep it relatively general
Meetings with Students

• Focus on them: their insights, their needs, etc.
• Ask lots of questions
  • What have been your favorite classes?
  • What do you like best about being a student here?
  • What would you like to see the department do more?
• Use what you learn in meetings with faculty and administrators
Meals

- Not likely in 2020-21, but may still happen over video
- Remember: it’s part of the interview
- Ask questions (good opportunity to go less formal)
  - What do you like best about teaching here?
  - Where do you live in town?
  - What do you think is the most interesting thing about the institution?
Big Tip: Have a Huge List of Questions

Questions you can ask almost anyone:

• What do you like best about working here?
• How has the college/university changed since you started?
• How do you see the department/college/university changing in the next five years?
• What surprised you most when you started working here?
• What’s your favorite thing about the students who take your classes?
• How would you describe the department’s culture?
• What would you say are some of the challenges facing the department/college/university right now?
After the Interview

• Send **thank you** notes
  • To everyone you had substantive conversation with

• Take thorough **notes** to help you reflect:
  • Do you want to work there?
  • What would you need to succeed in the position?
How can we help?
Keep Your Options Open

• Start exploring other career options *now*
  • A strategy for how to do that while on the faculty market
• Consider your funding and graduation timeline
  • Have frank conversations with mentors, when possible
• Take care of yourself & seek support
  • https://go.illinois.edu/gradcareersappt

Get the slides at: go.grad.Illinois.edu/Slides
Individual Career Advising

Application document review, interview preparation, negotiation strategy, career exploration, job search strategy

Sign up for an appointment at:

go.illinois.edu/GradCareersAppt
This Fall: Faculty Job Search Series

Wednesdays from 4:00-5:00 PM at Grad College 202 or https://go.grad.illinois.edu/eventspace

• 8/31: CVs
• 9/7: Cover Letters
• 9/14: Research Statements
• 9/21: Teaching & Diversity Statements
• 9/28: Faculty Interviews
• 10/5: Negotiation
• New! 11/16: Dual Career Considerations
Questions?

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